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Mr. Bok and the CIA

"The CIA," said President Derek C. Bok, "is declaring that it will simply ignore essential provisions of our guidelines."

The message Bok gave members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence last July was unambiguous: reasoned dialogue had failed; Congress must step in and make clear that government intelligence agencies cannot interfere as they please with university life, but must adhere to rules governing their activities.

Harvard's guidelines, promulgated in May 1977, are the first of their kind in the country. They ask the agencies to make public all research contracts and individual consulting arrangements involving Harvard personnel and require recruiting agents to identify themselves officially. Members of the Harvard community, for their part, are urged not to undertake covert recruiting or intelligence operations, not to participate in misleading propaganda activities, and not to help an agency obtain the "unwitting services" of other members of the University.

The guidelines, effective now on an interim basis, were announced a year after the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities had issued a report indicating "concern" over relationships that had developed on some campuses and urging universities to set up their own policies on intelligence activities. The committee felt that legislation would be both unenforceable and intrusive. Though no actual cases were cited in which academics had been misused, and though none are known of at Harvard, Bok took the committee's concern to heart, establishing a Committee on Relationships between the Harvard Community and United States Intelligence Agencies. Its four members—Archibald Cox, Don Price, Henry Rosovsky, and Daniel Steiner—deliberated for a year and drafted what were to become the guidelines.

The intention of the committee of four was to recommend policies that would safeguard the integrity of the academic community while permitting legitimate associations with government agencies. A balance was sought between the agencies' need to acquire information and the University's need—in Bok's words—for "trust and candor." The guidelines prohibited activities which appeared likely to threaten the atmosphere necessary to scholarly research.

Not long after the guidelines had been announced, President Bok received a letter from Admiral Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA. Though Turner objected that the guidelines requiring an academic to report his intelligence activities in writing impaired that person's personal freedom, he generally applauded the initiative Harvard had taken in creating the new rules. In subsequent letters the focus sharpened. Bok, replying to Turner, asked for clarification of the CIA's position on covert recruiting and on the use of faculty and staff for intelligence operations. Spokesmen meeting for several months confirmed Bok's impression that the agency was unwilling to abandon the two practices. In December 1977, Bok wrote:

> Covert recruiting by university personnel. . .bring[s] a new and disturbing element into the. . .academic community, represent[s] a serious intrusion of the government into our campus and classrooms, and violate[s] the privacy of individuals. . . The use of a professor for operational purposes while he is abroad for academic purposes, such as attending a conference in his field, is simply a use of the academic profession as a cover and consequently compromises the integrity of the profession and casts doubts on the true purposes of the activities of all academics.

Turner considered the question for five months, but without a change of heart. He refused to further limit CIA operations and explained in May:

> As it is, the restraints. . .we have already imposed on ourselves. . .have on occasion limited the capability of the intelligence community to perform the tasks it exists to perform. . . . Further extension of the restrictions to effectively rule out the two types of activities in question is neither legally required nor is otherwise advisable in light of the potential obstacles which such action would pose to this Agency's ability to further avail itself of a willing, valuable resource to assist the Government in the performance of legitimate endeavors in furtherance of the nation's foreign policy objectives.

Turner further claimed that the CIA had been "singled out," that its motives had been impugned by the requirement that confidential associations be publicly acknowledged, and that the Harvard policies deprived academics of "freedom of choice in relation to involvement in intelligence activities."

President Bok's testimony this summer depicted a Harvard that, in preparing guidelines, had willingly done what the Senate had asked, but whose sincere attempts to resolve differences with the CIA had been thwarted. He asked Congress to "make clear that these activities cannot continue" and drew an unsavory picture of what covert recruitment might entail:

> For example, in a seminar discussion [a] professor might probe the student's views on international affairs to advise the CIA with respect to the student's attitudes. In a counselling session the professor might ask questions about the student's financial situation, not for the purpose of helping the student but to provide additional information to the CIA that might be useful in obtaining the student's services. Professors might invite students to social occasions in order to observe the student and gain background information of use to the CIA.

As for operational use of academics, Bok explained that

> . . .a professor's academic status is used as a cover to engage in activities which presumably include collecting intelligence on instructions from the CIA, performing introductions on behalf of the CIA, playing a role in a covert CIA activity, or participating in some other way in CIA operations.

The Senate is currently considering a bill, S 2525, to provide a charter for U.S. intelligence agencies, one section of which applies to the relationship between the agencies and members of academic communities. While the future of the bill is not yet known, the issues of principle that are involved have excited lively discussion, even in the absence of a known case. Certain universities—among them Syracuse, Penn, Columbia, M.I.T., and the University of California—are developing, or have already set up, guidelines of their own. For Harvard and the CIA, the issues in the current disagreement are of more than passing interest. Their resolution, by Congress or otherwise, should have a profound effect everywhere on the tenor of academic life.

—HENRY S. MILLER JR.